

A Study on the Interaction between Gender Morality and Free Love in Early 20th Century China : Centered on Du Cheng Shu&Qu Jiang's Love Letter

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to answer the question of "love" and why it has been prohibited from entering the public sphere in Chinese history. This article takes the "Love Letter Incident" as a case study and uses the process tracking method to analyze the love letter incident between Du Chengshu (杜成淑) and Qu Jiang (屈疆). In this event, various social groups interacted on this matter, so this article horizontally compared the thinking and self-expression of young men and women in the face of love issues and vertically explored the premature and delayed disclosure of love issues under the trend of gender equality in China since the early 20th century. Examining and evaluating love issues by various parties in the public sphere is necessary for private love writing to move toward the public sphere. Through various evaluations of love letters, the issue of love has entered the public sphere. However, in China at the beginning of the 20th century, the issue of love still faced scrutiny from traditional Chinese gender morality and morality, making it difficult for love issues to be made public. This article finds that in early 20th-century China. The concept of "gender equality" accompanied by China's modernization movement (May Fourth Movement) was valued by society, and the morality of "gender equality" has never been established. However, Chinese society still maintains an unfriendly attitude towards women, and the perception of gender inequality is still considered normal.

Keywords- Early 20th Century China, Gender Morality, "Publicization" of Love, Public Sphere, Feminism in China.

I. INTRODUCTION

In traditional Chinese society, sexual morality between men and women often cannot enter the public sphere, and the issue of love has always been seen as "informal communication". However, in late 19th century China, social changes ushered in a shift in the public-private boundaries of traditional male-female sexual morality. With the modernization of learning from the West, the culture of free love has also prompted men and women to try to "public" the interaction of mutual love. However, "freedom of love" is at odds with the

traditional Chinese morality of male and female sexuality. In the definition of traditional Chinese morality of male and female sexuality, the relationship between men and women needs to maintain a certain distance. Especially for men and women who are not in a marital relationship, are not allowed to hand over items to each other, which means that "men and women give and receive without marriage". This idea symbolizes that love between men and women cannot become a formal public issue. In addition, with the entry of Western media into Chinese society since the 19th century, newspapers have become a field for the public to express their

opinions. Due to the public nature of the field of newspapers, people tend to believe that their issues refer more to "important issues of the country and society", but overlook that as citizens, their issues such as "public opinion" and "love" are also part of the country and society. Although China was transforming from a "dynastic state" to a "national state" from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, its social transformation was driven by state power, but its moral standards remained stagnant.

Unlike the traditional love between men and women presented in letters and love tokens, the active or passive communication of love between men and women in the field of newspapers and magazines is more public, adding constraints and responsibilities of public issues to love writing. In traditional China, the exchange of love letters between men and women is more about the free expression of emotions in the private field, and there is little discussion on topics other than expressing good feelings. In the correspondence between Qu Jiang and Du Chengshu, the male protagonist links the issue of China's elimination of the traditional system with seeking love from girls, and endows men and women with symbolic significance for achieving free love. In 20th-century China, men who opposed feudal ethics hoped to actively break free from the constraints of old sexual morality on women, and in action, hoped to help women realize their self-worth. This is because men believed that women's liberation was an important link for China to move towards democracy and prosperity.

Qu Jiang's love letter is not a traditional love letter text, but a manifesto mixed with men's imagination and expectations of new sexual morality in the era of new and old changes. The occurrence of Qu Jiang's love letter incident is a representative event of the transformation of new and old ideas in 20th-century China. Based on Xia Xiaohong's (夏晓虹)(Xia,2014) article "New Education and Old Morals - Taking Du Chengshu's Refusal to Qu Jiang's Letter as an Example", this article combs and analyzes the historical materials of the Qu Jiang Love Letter incident, and relies on three letters exchanged between Qu Jiang and Du Chengshu: "Qu Jiang's Original Letter", "Du Chengshu, Secretary of the Chinese Women's Association of Sichuan Female School Students, Answers to Qu Qiang's Secret Letter of the School Student", and "Reply to Du Chengshu's Letter of the Female Student", Exploring the writing and consideration of love issues by young men and women in the late Qing Dynasty, and further exploring the reasons for the alienation and distortion of love issues after entering the public sphere. In February 1907, during the Spring Festival holiday, Qu Jiang, a student of the Beijing Translation School (京师译学堂), saw Du Chengshu, a student of the Sichuan Female School (四川女子学堂) who was selling books to aid in relief on the street in a tea house. Qu Jiang personally wrote a letter, and the next day, Du Chengshu sent Qu Jiang's original

letter to the Beijing Translation School for supervision. Qu Jiang was immediately punished with expulsion.

Later, Qu Jiang wrote a letter to Du Chengshu and exchanged answers with Qu&Du and the two of them about the original letter. Qu Jiang eventually dropped out of school and left Beijing, and Du Chengshu became embroiled in a debate over the clarification of her identity by the Chinese Women's Association (中国妇人会). Therefore, this article focuses on the love letter incident between Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang in 1907, attempting to answer why the issue of "love" between men and women, as Chinese "citizens", was always considered an issue that could not be openly discussed until the early 20th century. Why did the relationship between gender and public-private boundaries in Chinese society at the beginning of the 20th century not modernize?

It should be noted that although many scholars believe there was no "citizen" identity in China during the late imperial period, this article believes that the early 20th century was a period of transformation in China. To become a modern country, China has gradually westernized and is trying to establish its own "Civic Culture". "Civic Culture" encompasses equality before the law and the personal equality of all citizens including gender morality (Almond 2008). It can be said that in the early 20th century, gender morality in China engaged in a game between tradition and modernity, but the results of practice did not have much impact on traditional Chinese gender morality.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Firstly, there have been rich achievements in the exploration of the transformation of new and old gender moral ideas in China during the early 20th century and around the May Fourth Movement. Yang Lianfen (杨联芬) (Yang,2016) and Xia Xiaohong (Xia,2005&2014) explored the evolution of gender issues in literary texts since the late Qing Dynasty. Yang Jianli (杨剑利) (Yang,2021) analyzed the cognition and debate of gender morality among Chinese intellectuals before and after the May Fourth Movement and pointed out that the argument of male elites towards feminism in the late Qing Dynasty was essentially a reconstruction of female morality. Xu Huiqi (许慧琪) (Xu,2008) and Zhang Suling (张素玲) (Zhang,2007) share the same view that the idea of free love has become a theoretical tool for many Chinese men to strive for their liberation and regulate women. She pointed out that at the academic level, Chinese intellectuals have shifted their understanding of new sexual morality from idealization to century actualization by sorting out the three debates on new and old sexual morality in the 1920s. Zhou Huimei's (周慧梅) (Zhou,2020) analysis of Zhou Jianren's (周建人) gender discourse presents the discourse of intellectuals in the Republic of China on

gender issues. Rebecca KARL (KARL,2012) reveals the social and cultural background of new women replacing traditional talented women, without explaining the interaction between men and women in the dissemination of feminist ideas. These scholars have explored the transformation of new, old, and new morals in China at the beginning of the 20th century, clarifying the process of development of new, old, and new morals in China.

Secondly, some scholars have explored the social practice of new and old gender morality, including free love, free marriage, and divorce issues. He Wei discussed the mate selection concepts of young men and women in the 1920s. Zhuyuan Han (Han,2023) analyzed women in the Women's Magazine and revealed that since the 1920s, Chinese women's self-awareness has been expressed through writing about love and marriage. Hang Suhong (杭苏红) (Hang,2015&2021) discussed Xu Guangping's(许广平) love journey from the perspective of gender sociology and depicted Xu Guangping's considerations in practicing free love as a representative of new women during the May Fourth period. Her analysis of love texts using social history methods has inspired the handling of love letter texts in this article.

Once again, some scholars have conducted case studies on the voices and practices of women in the public sphere. Zhou Ning's (Zhou,2015) historical analysis of the Han Yang Love Letter incident helps restore the truth, but it does not reveal the considerations of young men and women in defending themselves.

Tracy Ying Zhang (Zhang,2018) explored the group of Chinese female magicians in the public sphere at the beginning of the 20th century, revealing the role of female magicians in shaping the image of women in the public sphere. Xia Shi's (Xia,2021) article tells the story of diplomatic officials in the late Qing Dynasty who began to take their concubines (mistresses) abroad to attend the evening parties of foreign envoys, and these concubines played the role of public wives in social occasions. However, the public wife role derived from diplomatic activities is still an extension of the traditional "male lead outside, female lead inside", and these so-called new women are just decorations for male politics.

On the Transformation of New and Old Sexual Morals	The Practice of New Sexual Morals	Women in the Public Sphere
Xia Xiaohong, Yang Lianfen, Yang Jianli, Xu Huiqi, Zhang Suling, Rebecca KARL	Zhuyuan Han, Hang Suhong	Zhou Ning, Tracy Ying Zhang, Xia Shi

The above research is of great help in clarifying the new and old changes in gender morality in China at

the beginning of the 20th century. However, there is not much exploration of practical cases of women entering the public sphere, nor is there an analysis of the underlying reasons why women are unable to enter the public sphere, nor is there a substantial exploration of female subjectivity.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses the process tracking method to conduct a causal analysis of the process of publicizing love issues in the public sphere and then reveals the reasons for the failure of publicizing love issues.

1. Track the interaction process of love letters between Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang
2. Analyzing how the love letters between Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang have moved towards the public sphere
3. Tracking how the public sphere provided feedback on the love letter incident between Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang
4. Why did the issue of "love" fail in China's social transformation

Concept definition

1. Publicization: The process in which social entities with differences can engage in consultation and dialogue in the public sphere openly, thereby reaching consensus and gradually achieving fairness and public interest.
2. Public sphere: Every dialogue between actors prompts them to gather into a public group, and at this point, a portion of the public sphere is formed. When actors (including the state) engage in dialogue and interaction regarding their interests, issues related to private interests transform into public issues, thus creating a field of interaction that affects the relationships and cognition between actors.
3. Private sphere: The private sphere in this article refers to the private space formed between family members, friends, and partners. Each member in the private sphere is a private citizen and does not assume any public power or state functions.
4. Publicization of Love Issues: In the process of a certain topic entering the public sphere from the private domain, it is a dynamic process of removing the characteristics of the private domain and adding the characteristics of the public sphere, thus possessing public nature. At the beginning of the 20th century, the attempt to break boundaries and enter the public sphere of love issues, which originally belonged to the private domain, was the first step towards publicizing love issues. The game played by all parties in the process of publicization is essentially a debate on whether the issue of love should have a "public nature". The completion of publicization refers to the acceptance of love issues in the public sphere, which can be reasonably

discussed in the public sphere, and thus love issues have a public nature. Public failure refers to the stigmatization of love issues after they enter the public sphere, which creates resistance to other related love issues entering the public sphere.

5. Traditional gender morality: In the private sphere, traditional Chinese women need to obey the three obediences and four virtues(三从四德) and follow the arrangements of their father and husband before and after marriage, and after the husband's death, they need to follow the arrangements of their son(在家从父, 出嫁从夫, 夫死从子, 即三从). Women need to pay attention to the cultivation of four abilities: moral character, language, appearance, and sewing (the four virtues refer to women's moral character, language, demeanor, and Needlework)(妇德、妇言、妇容、女红, 即四德. "Male leads outside, female leads inside" (男主外, 女主内) refers to the participation of men in social and public affairs, women in household chores, and the need for women to be husband's "virtuous assistants" (贤内助) in the private field. The traditional discipline of "women without talent are virtuous"(女子无才便是德) deprives women of the right to receive equal education as men. "Women's Virtue" (女德) and "Women's Training" (女训) were textbooks for ancient women, aimed at educating them to become qualified wives and mothers.

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS & THEORY

This article attempts to integrate Robert Cox's environmental communication theory with Pan Yaling's (潘亚玲) (Pan,2019) international norm generation theory, and construct a new analytical framework to examine the interaction between social change and the public sphere. Environmental communication is a symbolic action in which our language and symbols are at play, creating meaning and actively constructing our world consciousness. Regardless of what "nature" and "environment" are, they are intertwined with our human understanding of the interaction between nature and the environment. Robert Cox noticed the interactive relationship between "structure" and "cognition" (Cox,2016), but the natural environment is not constant. Despite being in the natural environment and constructing our cognition, the natural environment on Earth is a continuum of changes. Behavioral entities and structures need a certain amount of time to adapt to and recognize each other, and this time creates a space for interaction, which is Robert Cox's public sphere. However, Robert Cox did not explain the generation mechanism of the public sphere well, so this article will expand on this basis.

Pan Yaling's normative generative model is a construction of the public sphere (Pan,2008). Pan

Yaling's specification generation model is based on Barry Buzan's security theory, believing that specification generation is a process of security (Buzan, et. al,2020). The so-called "security" refers to the process of designating and accepting a "threat". For example, when a threat is presented as an "existential threat" that requires taking measures beyond normal political procedures but can be considered legitimate and urgent, securitization occurs. When explaining the generation of international norms, the theory of security needs to identify four types of actors, namely: the security actors of security operations, the referents of security that need to be protected, threat agents, and ordinary listeners. The implementers of security are similar to advocates of norms, And threat agents are similar to normative opponents; The referent and audience sometimes overlap, often in a passive position in the process of security and standardization generation. The generation of international norms often goes through four stages.

Firstly, in the stage of creating a public agenda, security actors or normative advocates will propose security logic and strive to promote the process of relevant public agendas. To achieve this, actors must gather like-minded individuals and form a "Security Operations Alliance". Secondly, after entering the stage of public debate, to shape political pressure, it is necessary to promote a secure logic through debate, which requires actors to use "focused events" to continuously promote normative moral and temporal logic. Once again, after entering the political debate stage, it is necessary to further compress the agenda and establish candidate norms through a platform. Finally, through formal international negotiations, norms are concretized, including problem-solving methods, behavioral regulations, and normative forms, ultimately promoting the creation of international norms.

We can observe that Pan Yaling's normative generation is a mechanism of collective public opinion and the public sphere, but this always focuses on the structure of the collective and ignores the agency of the individual. Therefore, we reconstruct it by integrating the characteristics of the collective and the individual. The change in the environment is an objective fact in both artificial and natural societies, and this was true for Chinese society from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. The changes in the (social) environment promote simultaneous changes in the symbolic actions of individuals, so the forces of social change will work together in both the private and public spheres. At the same time, there is a process of "publicization" from the private domain to the public sphere. To explain how "publicization" occurs during the process of social transformation, this article traces the mechanism and process of the love letter incident between Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang.

H 1: With the occurrence of social change, issues in the private sector are gradually breaking the gender divide

between public and private. After breaking the gender divide between public and private, the original symbolic actions were challenged. The new agenda and social change jointly challenge the old moral norms, and the public sphere targeting this issue is also taking shape at this time.

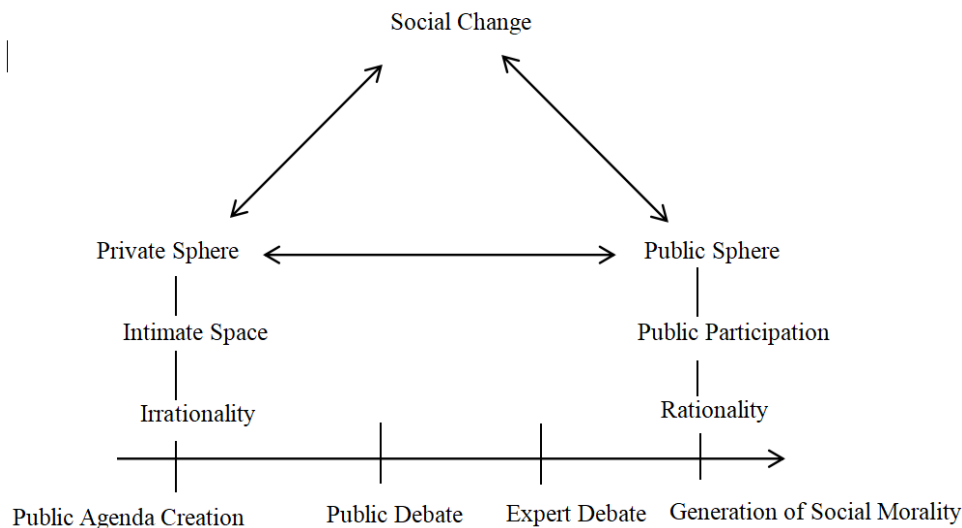
H 2: As the issue breaks the divide between public and private, issues that originally belonged to the private domain begin to enter the discussion of civic morality. At this stage, public debate determines whether the issue can attract the attention of experts.

H 3: If an issue enters the stage of expert debate, it represents that the issue has received sufficient attention

from social and national elites. At the same time, this also indicates an increased opportunity for new issues to become new ethical norms, and during this period, issues of practice and risk will be discussed.

H 4: Entering the stage of social morality generation indicates that this issue has become a new social consensus. This social consensus is recognized by the state and society, and at the same time, the state and society may ensure the legitimacy of new morals in the form of institutions. After establishing legitimacy, feedback will be given to the changing environment. (As shown in Table 1)

Table 1
Source: Created by the author



V. RESULT

1. The Integration of New and Old Education in China at the Beginning of the 20th Century

In ancient China, women were confined to the private sphere and unable to enter the public sphere. Women have not obtained legal status equivalent to adult men in the private sphere, and women are excluded from the public sphere. The rule of private meetings between men and women prohibits women from entering the public sphere and participating in social affairs with men.

Since the Opium War, the country has opened its doors and missionaries have founded the Church of Women's Education. Unlike traditional women's education, it incorporates elements of Western modernity, which to some extent helps women to have a sense of subjectivity and challenges the moral norms of men outside and women inside. It provides opportunities for women to break the traditional moral norms of the three obediences and four virtues (三从四德) and lays the foundation for women to move from the private sphere to the public sphere.

Du Chengshu is a student at the Sichuan Female School in Beijing. After discussion, Sichuan officials from Beijing decided to establish a women's school through joint efforts and funding from the Sichuan Association (四川同乡会) to adapt to the new situation of women's education development (Ching Hua Jih Pao, 1906). In April 1906, the Sichuan Female School opened. Wang Shanquan (王善荃), Du Deyu (杜德舆), and Sichuan officials residing in Beijing provided financial support to the Sichuan Female School (Ching Hua Jih Pao, 1906). Under the influence of the issue of saving the nation and striving for survival in the late Qing Dynasty, in terms of public morality, the School emphasized the need to cultivate female students into "female citizens" (Nü Kuo Min, 女国民), indicating that the Sichuan Female School was founded with a strong sense of social responsibility. To raise the awareness of female students towards the responsibility of female citizens, the campus of Sichuan Female School is specially located at the site of the Qin Liangyu (秦良玉) Memorial Hall of the Ming Dynasty female general from Sichuan. The establishment of the Sichuan Female School embodies the political ideal of late Qing literati,

which is to help female students receive education that benefits the country and the people. The establishment of the Sichuan Female School should be based on the issue of saving the nation and striving for survival, and the support of literati for women's schools belongs to their political ideal.

The teaching purpose and school regulations of Sichuan Female School reflect the contradiction between gender morality and public morality in early 20th-century Chinese society. The brochure of Sichuan Female School was compiled by Wang Shanquan and Du Deyu, and the diversity of curriculum and the cultivation of female citizens reflect the modern characteristics of the school. But in terms of gender morality, the school brochure continues the ancient Chinese norm that men and women should not engage in private contact. The teaching purpose of the school is to teach women modern general knowledge based on inheriting traditional female virtues. The school's curriculum is divided into ten subjects, including self-cultivation, Chinese language, history, geography, abacus calculation, books, handicrafts, foreign languages, music, and gymnastics practice, taking into account the multi-directional development of students' morality, intelligence, and physical fitness (Da Kung Pao,1906).

However, traditional gender norms are upheld in the study and travel safety of female students. Sichuan Female School has specific regulations to protect the safety of female students in and out of school. All teachers and workers in the school are women, and parents of students need to dispatch maids to be responsible for the transportation of students to and from school. The school sends patrol police to protect students on their way to and from school. The emphasis placed by Sichuan Female School on the personal safety of female students was aimed at reducing the probability of female students having contact with men during school and between the first and second semesters (Da Kung Pao,1906). The emphasis on gender segregation was a manifestation of the social isolation between men and women during the late Qing Dynasty and early Republic of China. The educational purpose and school safety regulations of Sichuan Female School reflect the characteristics of the integration of old and new. On the one hand, the diversified curriculum highlights the Westernization of the school. On the other hand, the protection of students' safety and the regulations on gender segregation continue the traditional Chinese gender morality.

Although the teaching goals and objectives of women's schools are mixed with the neutralization and compromise of traditional female virtues, the emphasis on cultivating female citizens is a preliminary attempt to encourage women to enter the public sphere from the private domain. In terms of gender morality, Sichuan Female School strictly adheres to the norms of traditional gender morality. In terms of public morality, women are also required to assume social responsibility

and become qualified "female citizens". As a student of Sichuan Female School, Du Chengshu also embodies the characteristics of a blend of Chinese and Western cultures in an educational environment. On the one hand, Du Chengshu, influenced by the issue of saving the nation and seeking survival, used the rhetoric of "worrying about the rise and fall of the country" to refute Qu Jiang's love letter. On the other hand, Du Chengshu, who was subjected to traditional gender morality, used gender segregation to refute Qu Jiang's expression of love for her.

In terms of gender morality, Du Chengshu adheres to the traditional gender morality of gender segregation. Compared to Qu Jiang's way of sending letters on a date, Du's Letter proposed a more reasonable acquaintance plan than sending love letters privately. Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang are very close to the tea stall, and if Qu Jiang has a good impression of Du Chengshu, he can express his feelings in front of her. After obtaining the consent of his elders, they can start a relationship (Shun T'ien Shih Pao,1907). Du's Letter refuted the statements in Qu Jiang's letter that the two had already communicated, and unilaterally declared and self-proved the fact that the two had never had any communication. Du Chengshu emphasized the need to record detailed information about guests when meeting them and informed her elders, but Qu Jiang's name was not included in Du Chengshu's meeting records, so the two had never met before. Qu Jiang mentioned in his letter that he had known Du Chengshu for nearly a year. Du Chengshu denied this point. In terms of public morality, Du Chengshu believes that women should bear social responsibility, and Qu Jiang's practice of sending love letters privately interferes with women's pursuit of social value. Du's letter believed that Qu Jiang's private delivery of a love letter to Du Chengshu was disrespectful to her personality. Du Chengshu believes that during the Spring Festival holiday, selling books to raise funds in the cold wind is a heroic act for women to shoulder social responsibility (Shun T'ien Shih Pao,1907). Qu Jiang's act of sending love letters privately hinders women from realizing their social value.

In Du Chengshu's letter, there is an ideal of being willing to take on social responsibility and participate in the cause of saving the nation like men. Du Chengshu tends to be open in public morality, but conservative in gender morality. Du Chengshu's gender morality lags behind public morality. The Beijing Translation School where Qu Jiang is located, although a modern school, has not achieved modernization in gender morality. The training program of Beijing Translation School is representative of China's modern schools in the 20th century. The teaching purpose of Beijing Translation School is to cultivate diplomatic talents who are suitable for China's modernization construction. The Beijing Translation School was established after the School of Combined Learning (京

师同文馆) and is one of the three affiliated institutions of The Imperial University of Peking (京师大学堂). The function of the Beijing Translation School is to expand and improve the Imperial University of Peking. The curriculum of the Beijing Translation School echoes the cultivation concept of modern diplomatic talents in the late Qing Dynasty (Wu,2020). The students of the Translation School have a study period of five years, with the first two years being supplementary high school courses, and the last three years being specialized studies. The first two years include mathematics, history, geography, physics chemistry, and natural history. In the last three years, they have subjects such as general law, international public law, private international law, economics, finance, and commercial economics (The Literature and History Materials Committee,2000). During the ten years of the Beijing Translation School, there were six principals and five graduates, with a total of over 300 students (Zhu,1987). In 1905, it recruited third-grade students, and in 1910, third-grade students graduated. Qu Jiang was a Grade C student and enrolled in 1905. When he was expelled in 1907, he only received the first two years of high school curriculum education. From the perspective of the curriculum offered by the Translation School, Qu Jiang's courses before dropping out were mostly general, which is in line with the Western talent cultivation plan. As a leading school in China that cultivates translation and diplomatic talents, the Translation School is at the forefront of learning Western culture. As a student of the Translation School, Qu Jiang tends to have an open attitude towards gender morality.

In terms of gender morality, Qu Jiang tends to break the social norms of gender segregation. In Qu Jiang's love letter writing, he took advantage of the recent trend of open communication between men and women to explain the rationality of delivering love letters. In the beginning, Qu Jiang talked about the current situation of gender segregation in China. Apart from the communication between opposite-sex relatives in the private sector, there are no public and legal opportunities for communication between men and women in the public sector (Chin Pao,1907a).

Qu Jiang also compared the customs of the North and the South. The South was already more open-minded in men's and women's communication, but the North was relatively conservative. Qu Jiang pointed out that there were signs of public social interaction between men and women in the South today. Qu Jiang also claimed to have made friends with female friends in Suzhou (苏州) and Shanghai (上海), to compare the strict customs of the North. At the same time, he also expressed his open attitude towards men's and women's communication (Pei Ching Jih Pao,1907). Qu Jiang positioned the letter to Du Chengshu as a normal category of heterosexual communication between men and women and pointed out that there should not be too many restrictions on heterosexual communication. After

being repelled by the Beijing Translation School and Du Chengshu publicly disclosing Qu Jiang's original letter, Qu Jiang once again talked about his attitude and principles towards male and female communication in his letter "Reply to Du Chengshu's Letter of the Female Student" (覆女学生杜成淑书). While reading foreign books and newspapers, Qu Jiang learned about the etiquette of Western men's and women's communication. As long as men and women feel good about each other after meeting, they can communicate and chat. If they feel suitable, they can continue to socialize. If not, they can separate, This type of communication method is not uncommon (Qu,1907). If we follow the rules of Western male-female communication, Qu Jiang's behavior of writing a letter to Du Chengshu and inviting the park is not considered excessive. Qu Jiang's "Letter to Du Chengshu, a Female Student" places the motivation for her first letter to Du Chengshu within the scope of normal heterosexual friendship between men and women, and lists the principles of Western male-female communication to argue for the reasonableness of male-female communication. Qu Jiang once again emphasizes that male-female communication belongs to the normal category of male-female communication and is in line with modern male-female social interaction (Qu,1907).

In terms of public morality, Qu Jiang believes that learning Western male-female communication is also an important part of China's modernization. Qu Jiang talked about the current situation of male and female communication in China, where there are no public or legal opportunities for communication between men and women in the public sphere, except for communication between relatives of the opposite sex in the private domain. Qu Jiang believes that since China has already learned advanced Western ideas, the transformation of male-female communication is necessary and should not be prohibited. At the end of Qu Jiang's writing, there was a desire to seek freedom abroad and vent his inner dissatisfaction. In Qu Jiang's love letter writing, he took advantage of the recent trend of open communication between men and women to describe the rationality of sending love letters. Qu Jiang's love letter conveys the hope for the modernization of Chinese male-female communication, which reflects the synchronization of Qu Jiang's public morality and gender morality.

Sichuan Female School and Beijing Translation School, the former is a model of promoting the culture of women's studies, while the latter is a new style of school that cultivates modern diplomatic talents, and is a model of advanced education in Chinese male and female schools in the early 20th century. However, under the background of new and old changes, the mixed educational situation of China and the West makes the definition of gender morality in schools unclear. The gender morality of young men represented by Qu Jiang is synchronized with their public morality, hoping to achieve social openness between men and women, that is,

modernization in male and female communication. However, young women represented by Du Chengshu have gender morality lagging behind public morality. Du Chengshu criticized Qu Jiang's behavior through the rhetoric of national discourse and traditional sexual morality. At the beginning of the establishment of the issue of love, due to the ambiguous definition of gender morality, young men and women repeatedly explored within the range of gender morality. The public power represented by the Chinese Women's Association used public opinion and public discussion to regulate the ambiguous gender morality through punishment and criticism of the parties involved, ultimately strengthening traditional sexual morality.

2. The Publicization of the Qu Du Incident and Public Sphere Comments on the Qu Du Incident

After receiving a love letter from Qu Jiang, Du Chengshu handed over Qu Jiang's original letter to the principal of the Beijing Translation School, marking the beginning of the publicity of the Qu&Du incident. On 22 February 1907, Du Chengshu received a handwritten letter from Qu Jiang, a student from the Beijing Translation School, while selling books to raise funds for the disaster area. On 23 February 1907, Du Chengshu submitted Qu Jiang's original letter to Zhang Qin, the supervisor of the Beijing Translation School, and wrote a letter to Zhang Qin outlining the negative impact of Qu Jiang's behavior of seducing girls. Du Chengshu pointed out that Qu Jiang's private delivery of letters not only damaged Du Chengshu's reputation but also related to the reputation of the Beijing Translation School and the Chinese Women's Association (Chin Pao,1907). Qu Jiang's behavior greatly insulted Du Chengshu, who was the secretary of the Chinese Women's Association. On the afternoon of February 24th, Principal Zhang Qin replied that Qu Jiang had violated Article 8 of the Student Code of the Translation School and was punished with dropping out of school. The punishment of Qu Jiang by the Beijing Translation School was publicly posted in the school on the morning of the 24th (Sheng Ching Shih Pao,1907).

Du Chengshu published Qu Jiang's letter in the newspaper, marking the deepening of the publicity of the Qu Du incident. With the support of newspapers, public debates were able to open up. Du Chengshu handed over Qu Jiang's original letter to the principal of the Translation School and also sent the letter to major newspapers and magazines, hoping that the editor could make it public. It can be seen that Du Chengshu had already made it public before the Translation School punished Qu Jiang. On February 26th, Beijing's Shun T'ien Shih Pao published a secret letter from Qu Qiang, a student at the Sichuan Female School, answered by Du Chengshu, the secretary of the Chinese People's Association. This is one of the earliest newspapers to publish Du Chengshu's original letter, and on the same day, Shun T'ien Shih Pao published news of Qu Jiang's overthrow. After the Shun T'ien Shih Pao made public

the private delivery of love letters by Qu Jiang, newspapers such as Pei Ching Jih Pao (北京日报), the Tianjin's Chin Pao (津报), The Chung Kuo Hsin Nü Chieh Tsa Chih (中国新女界杂志), and the Sheng Ching Shih Pao (盛京时报) reported on it. On March 5th, Shun T'ien Shih Pao published Qu Jiang's "Reply to Female Student Du Chengshu". The coverage of love letters in these newspapers has extended personal disputes in the private domain to the public sphere.

The criticism of Qu Jiang's behavior by Sheng Ching Shih Pao is lighter compared to that of Chung Kuo Hsin Nü Chieh Tsa Chih. The annotation of Qu Jiang's love letters by China New Women's Magazine adds personal likes and dislikes of the editor, and the criticism of Qu Jiang goes beyond the principle of dealing with facts and rises to the level of personal attacks. The Chinese New Women's Magazine added annotations after each sentence of Qu Jiang's original text. The editor of the Chinese New Women's Magazine believes that Qu Jiang's so-called study abroad in Shanghai, Suzhou, and other places is not a real study abroad. Qu Jiang mentioned in his love letter that he has several female close friends, and the editor of the Chinese New Women's Magazine believes that people with excellent qualities will not make friends with Qu Jiang (Chung Kuo Hsin Nü Chieh Tsa Chih,1907). The degree of criticism towards Qu Jiang varies among newspapers due to their different positions. This is because under the blending of new and old ideological trends, the definition of new and old sexual morality by the general public is still being explored, and the boundaries between new and old sexual morality are not yet clear.

Zhang Xincheng's (张心澂) recollection of Qu Jiang being expelled differs from what was written in Du Chengshu's letter at that time. Due to the possibility of misplaced memories, Zhang Xincheng's intuitive perception of Qu Jiang dropping out of school also proves the general understanding of the public and private domains of men and women in the late Qing Dynasty, that is, women are not the protagonists who publicly release messages about their love (The Literature and History Materials Committee,2000). Zhang Xincheng was a student at the Beijing Translation School. In Zhang Xincheng's recollection, he believed that after seeing Du Chengshu staring at him, Qu Jiang thought Du was interested in him, so he wrote a letter to Du Chengshu and accused Qu Jiang of being Du Chengshu's father rather than Du Chengshu. It is impossible to verify whether Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang had an intention, as Zhang Xincheng said. However, from Zhang Xincheng's recollection, it can be seen that in the social context of 1907, women generally could not act as fully responsible individuals to defend themselves in the public domain.

Although the reports in the newspapers are mostly criticisms of Qu Jiang, Du Chengshu, as a party involved in the incident, inevitably cannot escape the

fate of being criticized. With the increasing criticism of Qu Jiang in the newspapers. The Chinese Women's Association has also published a newspaper to clarify whether Du Chengshu is the Secretary of the Women's Association. On March 18, 1907, the Nanyang Branch of the Chinese Women's Association published an article stating that although Du Deyu and his wife were extremely concerned about fundraising for disaster relief, Du Chengshu, the daughter of Du Deyu, was not a member of the Chinese Women's Association, nor was she the secretary of the Chinese Women's Association (Shih Pao,1907a). On March 30th, Tianjin's Chin Pao published an original letter from the Nanyang China Women's Association Branch Office to the President of the Beijing Women's Association, Ying Shuzhong (英淑仲). The letter stated that at the fundraising site, due to insufficient staff, Du Chengshu's mother was appointed as a temporary organizer, and Du Chengshu also served as the temporary volunteer secretary. Chinese women believe that if the identity of Du Chengshu is not clearly stated, the spread of rumors about the love letter incident will cause discussions among female officials, thereby affecting the overall reputation of the female official community.

The Chinese Women's Association (中国妇人会) has repeatedly published newspapers claiming that Du Chengshu is not the secretary of the Women's Association. Du Chengshu's father, Du Deyu, immediately published a newspaper claiming that his wife Huang Mingxun (黄铭训) had established The Chinese Female's Association (中国妇女会), leading to the division between the Chinese Women's Association and the Du Huang couple (Shih Pao,1907b). Faced with some rumors and criticisms in the public sphere, the Chinese Women's Association did not side with Du Chengshu, but instead adopted a way to maintain the reputation of the Chinese Women's Association by drawing a clear line with her, thereby strengthening traditional gender morality. From the attitude of the Women's Association mentioned above, we can see that as a relatively authoritative women's group in early 20th century China, the Women's Association still holds a conservative attitude towards women's self-expression in the public sphere. This shows that since the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China, there is not much room for Chinese society to accommodate the issue of love in the public sphere. As shown in Figure 1

Figure 1

	Chinese Women's Association	Beijing Translation School	Chinese New Women's Magazine	Ta Kung Pao and other media
Qu Jiang(Male)	against	against	against	against
Du Chengshu (Female)	against	supported	neutral	supported

Source: Created by the author

During the public debate, after the principal of the Beijing Translation School expelled Qu Jiang, the newspaper's coverage of the Qu Jiang love letter incident inevitably impacted Du Chengshu, who was involved in the incident. The Chinese Women's Association published a newspaper claiming that Du Chengshu was not the secretary of the Women's Association. The Chinese Women's Association's approach to clarifying the relationship with Du Chengshu is in opposition to her open letter, believing that the ambiguous relationship between Du Chengshu and Qu Jiang discussed in the newspaper is damaging to the reputation of The Chinese Women's Association. The public authorities, represented by the Beijing Translation School and The Chinese Women's Association, hold a critical attitude towards the love letter incident, believing that Qu Jiang's love letter appeared in the public domain, damaging their respective reputations. Through punishment of the parties involved in the incident, indirectly reflects the maintenance of traditional sexual morality. As a result, the ambiguous gender morality of the new and old transformation eras becomes clear, new sexual morality is criticized, and traditional gender morality is strengthened.

3. The Failure of Gender Moral Modernization

The Qu and Du incidents resulted in Qu Jiang leaving Beijing to study in Japan, causing the division between the Du Deyu couple and Chinese women. The issue of love was rejected from the public domain, and traditional gender morality was emphasized. Du Chengshu handed over Qu Jiang's letter to Zhang Qin, the principal of the Beijing Translation School. The principal dealt with Qu Jiang's withdrawal from school, and Qu Jiang's original letter was publicly published in the newspaper, forming a public debate on the issue of love. In the public debate segment, the criticism of Qu Jiang by major newspapers and magazines attracted public attention to the Qu Du incident. As a party involved, Du Chengshu was criticized, and the clarification of Du Chengshu's identity by the Chinese Women's Association marked stagnation in the public debate segment. Both Qu and Du were criticized in the public domain, and the publicization of love issues failed. Since the New Culture Movement, with the exploration of the moral values of male and female chastity, and the promotion of male and female social openness and co-education in universities, conditions have also been provided for young men and women to practice free love.

However, the issue of love still faces obstacles in entering the public sphere, and gender morality in the public sphere has not been able to move towards modernization. There are three manifestations of the failure of gender moral modernization.

After the May Fourth Movement, with the spread of democracy and scientific ideas, Peking University allowed women to enroll in 1919, and the process of male and female students attending the same school steadily advanced. Although women had the opportunity to speak out in the public sphere, traditional gender morality still dominated the public sphere, and the reality of gender morality modernization still lagging behind required women to use traditional gender morality as a means of self-justification. From the end of 1923 to the beginning of 1924, Yang Donglin (杨栋林), a professor at Peking University, wrote many letters to Han Quanhua (韩权华), a female student, indicating that he wanted to further communicate with her. On May 7, 1924, Han Quanhua published "A Strange Letter" (一封怪信) in the *Ch'en Pao Fu K'an* (晨报副刊), publicizing Yang Donglin's letter to her to clarify their relationship. In the 1924 Peking University Han & Yang incident, Han Quanhua denied any communication between her and Yang Donglin, emphasizing that she and Yang Donglin were strangers, indicating her refusal to accept letters from strangers (Han, 1924). Du Chengshu also emphasized that she has a record of meeting guests in her daily life and needs to inform her elders about this rule, so she has never met Qu Jiang (Shun T'ien Shih Pao, 1907). Han Quanhua stated that she did not conceal anything from her parents and did not open letters from many suitors (Han, 1924). In the love letters of Qu & Du and Han & Yang, Du Chengshu and Han Quanhua had a common point in their replies, which was the emphasis on "having no contact" with the male partner, reflecting the inertia of women to prove their innocence under traditional gender morality.

Some male elites still adhere to traditional gender morality and deny the fact that women are harassed through preconceived moral judgments. The fate of stigmatizing the issue of love in the public sphere after the May Fourth Movement is in stark contrast to the self-proclaimed innocence of women and the criticism of male elites for being "alarmed". The public release of love letters by Han Quanhua in 1924 sparked opposition from some male elites in the intellectual community. Jiang Shaoyuan (江绍原), who was then a professor at Peking University, first wrote a letter criticizing Sun Fuyuan (孙伏园) for publishing the "strange letter", believing that the matter between Peking University teachers and students should be resolved within the campus of Peking University and should not be expanded to the field of public opinion (Jiang & Sun, 1924). However, Sun Fuyuan holds a different view, stating that the Yang & Han's incident, which was finally resolved under public scrutiny, precisely demonstrates the importance of public opinion

supervision (Jiang, 1924). Xi Ming (奚明), a journalist from *Women's Weekly*, also believes that Han Quanhua's act of publicly disclosing letters is true and inappropriate, and Han should adopt a downplaying approach (Xi, 1924).

The methods provided by Jiang Shaoyuan and Xi Ming for Han Quanhua may seem reasonable, but in reality, they overlook the fact that since Yang's letter, the four scandals have caused Han Quanhua great trouble. The reportage based on Yang Han is a classic example. Han Quanhua recounted in "A Strange Letter" that she had accumulated love letters, most of which were never opened and read. However, suitors came one after another, making her very annoyed (Han, 1924). However, in the eyes of male judges, female student Han Quanhua's public disclosure of Yang Donglin's letter is an act of "losing control". Zhou Zuoren (周作人) also expressed his fear of women. "I learned two lessons from this incident, namely the lack of credibility of the majority and the fear of women." (Tao, 1924) After the May Fourth Movement, the process of co-education between male and female students continued to advance. However, there is still debate and exclusion among male literati about whether to place the issue of love in the public domain, and the issue of love entering the public domain was rejected.

After the story of free love entered the public domain, it still faced scrutiny and criticism from public power. Although there was a trend of open social interaction between men and women after the May Fourth Movement, the free love of young men and women still could not be freely publicized in the media. The space for free love in the public domain was still narrow, and the setting of gender morality by public power was still conservative. In April 1923, the romantic relationship between Xu Yingxi (徐颖溪), a trendy young man, and Yao Zuobin (姚作宾) was criticized by people. Xu and Yao compiled pictures of their love into a booklet and distributed them to the Qingdao government, which was criticized as resembling a spring palace painting. Xu Yingxi's speech on their love experience at the wedding was also mocked, and young men and women rushed to listen to their love experiences. Their high-profile love story caused dissatisfaction in the Qingdao political community. The leaders of the Qingdao National Assembly criticized Yao Zuobin, believing that his behavior was not conducive to promoting a good social atmosphere. The political circles in Qingdao believe that the love story between Yao Zuobin and Xu Yingxi would be harmless if placed in the private sphere, but it is extremely inappropriate to make this matter public, as spreading it abroad would damage the country's image (Ta Kung Pao, 1923).

After the May Fourth Movement, although the ideas of democracy and science were widely spread in China, and the process of coeducation continued to advance, the issue of love still faced the fate of stigmatization when it entered the public sphere. In

public debates, women adhere to traditional gender moral norms as a way to prove their innocence. The rhetoric of traditional female sexual morality in public debates once again proves the dominant position of traditional sexual morality in China in the 1920s. Women can only avoid more intense criticism by standing on the side of traditional sexual morality. The criticism of free love by the government's public power reinforces the legitimacy of traditional morality. The issue of love after the May Fourth Movement, in the process of becoming public, still cannot escape the backlash of conservative forces in the public debate stage.

VI. CONCLUSION

In the process of transitioning from the private domain to the public domain and achieving publicization, the issue of love and affection needs to go through four stages: public agenda creation, public debate, expert debate, and the formation of new social morality. This article uses the process tracking method to analyze Qu&Du's Love Letter incident in 1907, and compares it with Han&Yang's incident at Peking University in 1924, attempting to explain the reasons for the failure of public realization of the love issue, exploring which stage of publicization the issue of love has been discontinued. Research has found that Qu&Du's Love Letter incident began with the creation of a public agenda on love issues after Du Chengshu made the love letter public. In the public debate, traditional gender morality has always dominated, manifested in the suppression of Du Chengshu, who attempted to use new gender morality, by the public power represented by the Chinese Women's Association, thereby destroying opportunities for the continued development of new gender morality. Traditional gender morality has been strengthened, and the love letter incident ended with Qu Jiang dropping out of school and Du Chengshu's reputation being damaged. After the establishment of the Republic of China, the governments of Yuan Shikai(袁世凯), Duan Qirui(段祺瑞), and Feng Guozhang(冯国璋) all issued decrees praising virtuous women and martyrs. In mainstream culture, old sexual morality still dominated, and after the May Fourth Movement, feudal ideology was criticized. Although modern gender morality was promoted, the issue of love still could not be properly handled in the public domain. In the 1924 Peking University Han&Yang Incident, The scene of Du Chengshu using traditional gender morality as a self-protection weapon is once again portrayed. Han Quanhua and Du Chengshu's self-confession reflects the importance of love issues in public debates. Women, as parties to love scandals, demonstrate that traditional gender morality is more effective in safeguarding personal interests than adhering to modern morality. However, after the May Fourth Movement, there was also significant progress compared to 1907. For example, in the Han & Yang incident, some

male elites believed that Yang Donglin, who took the initiative to write love letters to Han Quanhua, should bear the primary responsibility.

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